

City of Socorro

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What's up with the City After School Program? Plenty!

For the past several years, the City of Socorro has sponsored an after school program for students in Kindergarten through 8th grades. It was a huge program and a huge success, thanks primarily to the efforts of program coordinator Cindy Rivera. This fall the Socorro Public Schools received money to have an After School Program, and rather than duplicate efforts, the City changed their focus to middle school and high school students.

While the program is open to any student who wants to participate (and many do), it is mandatory for those who have been referred to the program by the juvenile court system. Those students are expected to be at the program daily from 3:00 to 5:30 and 12:30 to 5:30 on early release days. It's quite a change, but "Miss Cindy" is up to the challenge.

Been There, Done That

Cindy Rivera was raised in a single parent home, the youngest of 7 children, each with a different father. She grew up angry and belligerent, and spent time in the court system. After a stint in what at that time was called Reform School, Rivera was given a home with her uncle's family, and she finished high school.

"Someone gave me a second chance," she says, and she aims to do the same for those in her program.

"I'm not going to go away, I'm not going to kick them out of the program. They have to be

accountable for their actions. There are plenty of windows to wash and floors to scrub here," she laughs.

"The Mayor wanted to provide self-esteem and encouragement to these kids and to let them have a safe, secure environment," Rivera explains. They're all given the same opportunities, and for those who take responsibility for their actions, maintain at least a C average and are consistent in their attendance, there is the possibility of being hired by the City. One of the students will be working as a scorekeeper during basketball season and earning a little extra money.

What's There to Do?

Afternoons are busy for these students. Homework comes first, if they bring it with them. They organized the Christmas card drive for Socorro's overseas military personnel and spent hours decorating their Christmas Parade float. Basketball season will start soon.



Cindy (2nd from right), kids and crew prepare Christmas boxes to send overseas.

Every Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, Manny Marquez and Gene Torres are on hand to teach the kids to play pingpong..

Cindy says it's important to stick to a regular routine for daily life. "Working towards showing them stability and love and care in their life," says Cindy. "I just want them to have something that's always there. Like Mayor Bhasker says-- something they can depend on."

It Takes More Than Just "Miss Cindy"

Rivera will tell you the program is successful because of those who work with her. She is assisted by a crew of 3 staff members (Arlene Chavez, Elias Jacquez and Dakotah Del Curto), 3 "Grandmas and Grandpas" (Leo Mendoza, Lala Fraissinet and Delores Medina) from the Foster Grandparent program, and Angelique Guterrez, Alejandro Jaramillo, both seniors participating in the school-to-work program. They help with the after school activities as well as taking care of the building.

And That's a BIG Job!

Rivera recounts cleaning the old west wing. It was partially remodeled by the Army Corps of Engineers and then abandoned when the money ran out. Rats and mice had made it their home and it was repeatedly vandalized and painted with graffiti. For a week and a half Cindy's team cleaned: sweeping, washing walls, painting and filling 3 county dumpsters with trash and debris.

One More Thing...

As if keeping buildings clean and kids busy are not enough, Cindy is out to get community members involved as well. The students' pinpong program has been so successful, Rivera is considering staging a city-wide ping pong tournament for teams.

"Anybody who is interested can practice here (at Finley Gym) Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings from 5:00 to 7:30. We have 3 tables," she says. If you want to be part of the fun, watch local papers for more information.

Meet Your Legislators!

Tuesday, December 15, Socorro City Hall is the place to be to meet your legislators face to face. Senator Howie Morales, Senator David Ulibarri and Representative Don Tripp will be on hand to hear your concerns and address your questions beginning at 1pm. The Socorro County Chamber of Commerce requests that you RSVP by calling 575-835-0424 before 5:00 pm, Monday, Dec. 14.

Looking for a cozy place to curl up and read this winter? Try your library....

Socorro Public Library is getting a face lift that will make it a more pleasant and energy-efficient place to spend time during the cold winter months. The Southwest Reading Room and main book room will both get new double-paned, low-E windows to replace windows originally installed in the 1950s and 1970s. New stucco on the outside of the building will correct recent leaks around cracked parapets and cracks resulting from normal weathering. The changes should be completed by the end of the year if the weather remains nice.

The employee area on the third floor has been completed. Workspace for ordering, cataloging and processing materials as well as an employee breakroom were part of the original plan for the addition, the majority of which was completed in 1999.

Funding from the general obligation bond has been used to purchase a new server and several new work stations for public use.

City Council

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